The NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

L. I. SCHENECTADY, N. Y., DECEMBER, 1939 No. 3

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mposition Major

n inquiry in The News Letter June, 1939, concerning the or- zation and status of majors in position brought replies from e than a dozen different in- tions. Three types of organiza- s are seen to exist.

rst of all, the need for a com- ion major is made rather dis- ingly evident in a letter from H. L. Creek, of Purdue Uni- ty. Dr. Creek writes that the ety for the Promotion of Engi- ing Education has for several s been studying English in- ction in engineering colleges, finds that "teachers fresh from uate schools do not know how each composition, and some- s are unable to write really ptable English." He would like how particularly what a college ish instructor should be taught mposition. Dr. Creek favors a r in English composition, both rgraduate and graduate.

ch a major is offered by sev- of the colleges replying to the r of inquiry. A major in rheto- both undergraduate and grad- with emphasis on rhetorical ry, is offered at Pennsylvania College. Although it does not an undergraduate major in position, the State University wa permits the substitution of ive writing for the usual dis- tion in the graduate school. Norman Foerster writes, "As uate work we very definitely urage creative writing." Syra- University likewise allows uate credit in composition. Dr. W. Gay of Simmons College s that they have "what is ally a major that appeals to nts interested in writing as a , craft, or art."

Fordham University, compo- is taught as an art. "Why," Dr. Francis P. Donnelly, ld not poems, plays, essays, raphies, speeches, and other ions be honored as highly as ation honors the reassorted in- ation or the dry statistics of a s or dissertation?"

posed to this point of view is roup of colleges emphasizing ature almost to the exclusion mposition. In some cases, Stan- University, for example, pro- n is made for certain excep- l students to elect composition ses. Other institutions offering ature as the sole English ma- appear dissatisfied with the culum as set up, and are un- king experiments to remedy situation. The University of ton, for instance, has been ng to find a way and means teaching composition through idual instruction in the labora- " Dr. Howard R. Driggs, of York University, expresses re- at the lack of more adequate sion for composition work.

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SCRIBES AT WORK (circum 717 A. D.)

Holinshed's "Scotland", 1st ed. Courtesy of Warren Shepard, Syracuse U.

NOTICE

College teachers of English at the undergraduate level are invited to attend the dinner of the COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION in New Orleans Thursday evening, December 28, whether or not they are members of the CEA. Place: Arnaud's Restaurant, 813 Bienville Street; Time: 6:00 P. M.; Price, $1.50. Following the dinner program, the first annual meeting of members of the association will be held in the same place for the adoption of a constitution and the election of officers. An adjourned meeting is scheduled for 9 o'clock Friday morning. Announcements of the dinner program and subjects of discussion at both meetings will be announced to all on arrival at MLA headquarters. Program Committee, Herbert Drennon, Mississippi State College, chairman; Clifford P. Lyons, University of Florida; Cleanth Brooks, Louisiana State University; Burges Johnson, Union College, Schenectady, N. Y.

The New England Meeting of C. E. A.

More than 125 representatives from forty New England universities, colleges, and junior colleges attended the regional meeting of the C. E. A. at Worcester, Massachusetts, on November 3-4. The decision of the meeting was that a New England group of C. E. A. should be organized, and the chair was authorized to appoint a committee of five of those attending the meeting to draw up plans. Professor H. H. Scudder of the University of New Hampshire was asked to act as chairman of such a committee.

At the preliminary informal discussion the feeling seemed to be that the aims of the C. E. A. would not conflict with those of the Modern Language Association or the National Council, and that some sort of journal devoted to the teaching of literature and writing to undergraduates ought to be established. The proposal that the C. E. A. should foster the interpretation of literature **as literature** was sympathetically received.

When the question arose as to what any journal of the C. E. A. could deal with, it was pointed out that the papers given at the Worcester meeting were of a kind valuable yet difficult to place in any of the existing journals. These papers dealt with the literary values in Old English (George K. Anderson, Brown), the attitude of Boswell toward his material while he wrote the **Life of Johnson** (Frederick A. Pottle, Yale), the place of semantics in undergraduate courses in writing and literature (F. Cudworth Flint, Dartmouth), the possibility of developing a major in composition (Agnes F. Perkins, Wellesley), and the use of Freshman English as a "service" course to various college departments (Theodore Morrison, Harvard).

Since several of those at the meeting wish immediately to make the C. E. A. a means of exchanging opinions on teaching literature and writing in undergraduate courses, it has been suggested that informal meetings be held as occasion arises in various parts of New England. The University of New Hampshire has already extended an invitation to the entire New England group for its next meeting.

Most encouraging was the opinion of the majority at Worcester that though the program of the C. E. A. may not yet be finally crystallized, there is need for some organization of teachers of undergraduates between the "research" organizations and the organizations devoted to educational methods.

A Pro-Seminar in American Literature

About four years ago I found myself with an enrollment of 55 in a course in American Literature: that was, relatively speaking, a very large number, since the total junior and senior electorate was about 150. It was the usual lecture course, with its counterpart on hundreds of college and university campuses: lectures by the instructor, readings by the students in a thick book of scrappy selections in the field, some supplementary reading assignments, term papers, periodic tests, and a final examination.

Toward the middle of the year I got tired of carrying 55 young minds on my mental shoulders; it was that feeling of discouragement that at one time or another comes to most teachers. Like a religious conversion, I recall the exact occasion that crystallized the long-felt dissatisfaction; it was when I overheard a student pass off as his own **ex cathedra** judgment a remark that I had made about Emerson. The disturbing fact was that that student's reading was not extensive enough to warrant any expression of opinion whatever. I decided so to revise the course as to compel the students to lay a foundation for their opinions by reading the sources and to express their opinions in the classroom where they could be checked and discussed.

First it was necessary to reduce the size of the class; with that end in view enrollment was limited to seniors, stiff prerequisites were set up in history and philosophy, and the consent of the instructor was required. Sixteen students gathered for the first meeting of the new course; but after the procedure was outlined and the uncompromising rule of no absences announced, the number was reduced to eight. In the next two years the course had six or seven; this year it has eleven.

The course consists mainly of written reports by the students. Each student is assigned a subject and a date is set on which he reads his paper to the class; as soon as he completes one assignment he is given another. When there were six students one paper was assigned for a class period; with eleven students, two shorter papers are scheduled, continuing the average of one assignment for each student every two weeks.

The subjects of each round of papers are more or less closely related: a round on the Puritans, a round on Emerson and Thoreau, a round on Hawthorne and Melville, a round on contemporary novelists. In the beginning the first subject in each round was designed to pro-

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COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION
Established 1939
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Henry C. F. Staunton, Notre Dame
Secretary - - - Burges Johnson
Union College, Schenectady, N. Y.

The author, the critic, and the college teacher of English may be partners in an exalted enterprise.

EDITORIALS

We Display Our Latin

"Occidit miseros crambe repitita magistros" was remarked by Juvenal a little more than 1800 years ago, and we are informed that he was quoting a Greek proverb which may have been first uttered centuries before that. At the risk of affronting our scholarly membership, let us freely translate that "warmed-over cabbage has been the death of unhappy schoolmasters." (Let it be confessed that we ourselves have called into council the erudite head of our Latin department.)

Evidently for these many centuries there has been a popular impression that teachers shrivel up like autumn leaves because of the routined character of their work. Repetition, like warmed-over cabbage, destroys them. Yet there are two fundamental weaknesses in that old epigram. The teacher need not repeat himself; or the repetition itself may be like the words of a ritual which take on new freshness and vividness with each repetition.

This temporary editorial task undertaken so lightly has provided a richness of experience that one could not easily forget or ever regret. Letters come fluttering in on the four winds from schoolmasters young and old, some accompanied by learned articles, some by articles not so learned, and some written for no purpose at all other than to carry a word of greeting or a practical suggestion or merely to expose a colleague's friendly state of mind. Such a cross-sectional glimpse of college English teachers is heartening, to say the least. There is no evidence that warmed-over cabbage has brought on any premature dissolution. There is in fact every evidence to the contrary. Among the older ones there is a revelation of that excellent ripening which is accompanied by no decay at the core; and in the younger there is a sort of zeal which, while it may rouse a smile over what age might describe as windmill-tilting, yet carries no hint that our warmed-over food is beginning to affect the digestion of our young men.

If CEA can serve to bring these old and young together, here and there, for discussion or merely for better acquaintance; and if it can furnish some medium for the exchange of ideas and the spreading of a contagion of enthusiasm, it will justify any amount of trouble at the start.

Our First Regional Meeting

On another page is a concise report of the meeting at Worcester, Massachusetts, of the college English teachers of New England who have formed a regional section of CEA. Many who have urged the formation of our society have expressed the belief that its usefulness will lie largely in its stimulation of sectional meetings. Only a small proportion of the membership can attend any annual assembly, wherever it may occur. The pleasant contacts that may happen there between colleagues who have hitherto known each other only through the written page, and the stimulation from addresses cannot benefit a large number at best. But if CEA encourages the organization of regional groups of college English teachers at the undergraduate level, and gives each group some sense of relationship to other such groups, and some means of intercommunication, it may thus render its greatest service to our field of teaching.

An Admonitory Word

A few of those teachers who have most earnestly advocated the organization of CEA have failed to qualify as members by sending their names and temporary dues to our treasurer. That this is an oversight is quite evident from the fact that they continue to write letters of encouragement or good counsel to the secretary. But unfortunately their names are omitted from the official membership list of the organization, and notices sent only to members would not reach them Verbum sap.

Here is an appropriate place to repeat a request to all members attending our dinner and meeting in New Orleans (or non-members wishing to attend our dinner on Thursday evening) that they send a one-cent government postcard to the Secretary pro-tem. apprizing him of the fact.

The preparation of this NEWS LETTER has been a task of assembling rather than of editing. Whether there shall be any sort of CEA periodical is yet to be determined, and this modest leaflet is gotten out in more than one experimental form with a minimum of labor in order to throw light upon the question. The material in this issue was largely unsolicited; and an analysis of all manuscript thus far sent to the editor indicates that members desire more to discuss the machinery of teaching than the results of reflective criticism. Shall we then assume that if our association is to become articulate, its expressed ideas would in general follow such a pattern? If that be the case, there are periodicals enough, ready to hand. Let them assemble the dry bones.

It is interesting to note that our two contributors who have thus far protested against the use of contemporary literature as the subject-matter of a college course, are both authors of widely discussed current fiction.

Contemporary Lit. Again

My dear Editor:

Like Mr. Canby, I do not believe in courses in contemporary literature, and for just the reasons which he advances, namely:

> "I think that the matrial is still too untested for satisfactory teaching, and that the very large majority of teachers are not sufficiently in the atmosphere of the writing world to interpret and discriminate in any definite way."

But I am afraid you will not think me very obliging if I merely quote Mr. Canby—you will think I am taking a very easy way of replying to your question.

I have also other reasons. In the first place, most American boys are hurried into active life so early, that even the few who have the possibility of developing literary taste have scarcely time to do so. Unless they read the great English classics in high school and in college, they never find time to read them. And that means that in their maturity they have no background. By "classics" I certainly do not mean rather special things like the works of Sir Thomas Browne or De Quincy, but the great books that still influence the life and thought and standards of the English speaking peoples. Within the last five years, for example, an amazing number of quotations from Shakespeare's plays and sonnets have been pertinently used in the editorial colums of the New York **Times** and the New York **Herald Tribune.** In each case the editor used them not to exhibit his knowledge, but to drive home his point. I think we should all, in our school days, be given a chance at Shakespeare, Milton, Fielding, Jane Austen—coming down as late at Thackeray, George Eliot, George Meredith, and Thomas Hardy. I don't mean that "Macbeth" or "The Egoist" or "Henry Esmond" can be "taught" at all. I mean that the students can be "exposed," so to speak, to the classics. If the germ "takes," even in very few, it will develop, and give them a great deal of pleasure in life. And those who do not catch the infection will certainly not be at all harmed.

As regards contemporary literature, the work of living authors, I think young people should be allowed to discover for themselves what they like. For young people, half the pleasure of reading new books is in finding them out for themselves. If a boy goes quite wild about a very silly new book, his teacher can never convince him that it is not good. If he finds a really good one out for himself, it counts with him for a great deal more than if he had been told he must read it. No book can be called a "classic" until it is a hundred years old, surely. How many so-called "classics" have you seen die in your own lifetime, Mr. Johnson? A fine taste for literature is largely a matter of the ear, and is as rare as absolute pitch in music. But a great many boys and girls can enjoy a great play like "Julius Caesar" because of its relation to life, and they do get **something** out of the power and beauty of the lines.

While I do not believe that English literature can be "taught" in the sense that Latin can be taught, I know from experience that an instructor who is really steeped in his subject, who loves both literature and life, can, by merely expressing his own honest enthusiasms, or his honest objections, have a great influence on young people. If the English teacher is vain and opinionated, and wishes to astonish his classes by a lot of diagrams and formulae which are supposed to explain to them how "Julius Caesar" was written, and why "Far from the Madding Crowd" is a fine novel, he will prejudice his better students against the subject he teaches, and will immensely reinforce the self-satisfaction of the shallow and conceited ones. Willa Cather.

Membership Eligibility

My dear Editor:

I read with close interest the editorial in the October issue of **The News Letter.** May I express an opinion relative to the question of membership? It is quite clear, of course, that if the formation of a new organization for teachers of English is to be justified, it must be shown that its function will be distinct from that of any existing body. I think that this has been done and that the specific objective of the new association has been fairly well defined. However, while it is generally agreed that the association should exist for teachers who are conducting classes in English on the **undergraduate level,** it seems to me that that term ought not to be used in too narrow a sense. In brief, I do not agree with those who would restrict membership in the association to teachers in liberal arts colleges.

Let me cite the case of the teacher who is conducting contact courses in English in a school of education where high academic and cultural standards prevail and where students are awarded a university degree upon the completion of their programs. That teacher shares with the teacher in a liberal arts college all of the interests and problems which go with teaching undergraduates. He presents the same subject matter in his courses and he recognizes the same objectives. In many cases he undoubtedly belongs to societies such as the M.L.A., The National Council of English Teachers, and The English Association. Why bar him from The College English Association, which is designed for teachers who are teaching English to undergraduates?

Donald F. Connors
Fordham University

I am delighted to hear that some of my old colleagues and many of my friends are now taking the necessary steps to establish an organization of our college teachers of English, and a worthy literary organ of their own. It is more effective to teach by example than by precept; and, through periodic publication, our college teachers of English should be offered every possible encouragement to set a high example of literary style.

Clayton Hamilton.

ART

Here is a new kind of parlor game. It consists of reading books on the theory of art and then trying to express their contradictions in epigram. These samples are offered to students who haven't time to read the books. I have made thirty-one, but might as well have made three hundred, for "'tis as easy as lying." If the student will read and think about one sentence each day for a month, he may not find it necessary to read the books.

1. The public cares nothing about art, but is always proud of having it.
2. Nations care nothing about art, but are remembered only when they have it.
3. Millionaires are the enemy of art, but what they buy is usually the best.
3. Masterpieces are always masterpieces, but there are fashions in masterpieces.
5. Government - controlled art is simply dead art.
6. Popular art is poor art, but great art is always popular.
7. Art becomes social by first being personal.
8. The artist works for himself, but without a public is unhappy.
9. The artist scorns the public, but hopes the public will not scorn him.
10. Art is opposed to nature, but lives on her.
11. Art and science are opposed only as the sexes are opposed.
12. The moralist suspects the artist, but could learn from him.
13. Logically art is technique, but technique is always sterile.
14. The psychologist can explain the artist but not art.
15. The photograph is always exact, but always false; the great painting, never exact but always true.
16. The mother of Art is Intuition, but its father is Hard Work.
17. Art is primitive but the artist is civilized.
18. The success of art is simplicity, but its meaning is alway ambiguous.
19. Progress in art is always a revolt but never a revolution.
20. Imitation is the death of art, but every master imitates somebody at first.
21. Each art is greatest when it is autonomous, but each tends to become another.
22. The more truly artistic a work is the fewer people like it. This is true of literature too; but the more literary any other art is, the more people like it.
23. Art cannot be taught and yet artists teach one another.
24. Appreciation is as spontaneous as creation, but each is a growth.
25. Before an art-work we should think of nothing but its art; and yet if we do we shall never really apprehend it.
26. If art is the creation of beauty, why do most masterpieces impress us at first as ugly?
27. In creating beauty the artist must not think of beauty but of truth.
28. Classicism and romanticism, like inertia and energy, are halves of the same thing, but the thing has no name .
29. Pure romanticism and pure realism would both be lies.
30. The trouble with humanism is that it isn't natural, and with naturalism that it isn't human.
31. Ever since Plato art has been explained and, although nobody accepts the explanations, art is still explained.

Robert Gay.

A Writing Laboratory

One of my waggish colleagues, just returned from a trip to a part of the country infested with Lubratoriums, Natatoriums, and Moratoriums, refers to its as the "Scriptorium." But discretion has compelled us to christen it with the more conservative title of "The English Writing Laboratory."

The idea is not new, of course. Even before the erection of a new library afforded us space for our experiment, we had been corresponding with the Universities of Florida and Minnesota, where the idea has been tried out, and from them we received invaluable suggestions. Thanks to the advice which we obtained, we are not quite in the position of the conscientious new mother who finds that she has remembered everything but safety pins.

The philosophy of the laboratory —if our needs and desires can be dignified by the name of a "philosophy"—was that it would afford a place where **any** student in the university could write, whether he was enrolled in a composition course or not. More specifically, we hoped to accommodate classes in composition, especially Freshman English. And, finally, we hoped to accomplish in the Laboratory certain remedial work for students from any department of the university who are reported by their instructors as being deficient in the use of English.

At present we are concentrating especially on the freshmen. Our course this year consists of 29 sections manned by a staff of 16 instructors and associates. These sections meet twice a week in regular classrooms and once a week in the Laboratory, where they do their written work. Before he comes to class each student goes through two preliminary steps in preparing his theme: the first (Part I) consists of a series of rough notes on the topic, which may be either assigned by the instructor, or optional; the second (Part II) is an outline prepared from the rough notes. Thus, when he comes to the Laboratory, the student is prepared to commence his first draft (Part III). While he writes, the instructor and assistants circulate through the class, looking over the students' outlines and seeing, **in general,** that the students are on the right track. I emphasize "in general" because there is no opportunity (even if it seemed desirable) to answer detailed questions. There are enough dictionaries and reference books on the shelves so that students can be trained to look up purely mechanical problems, and find the answers. At the end of the hour the students may stay if they desire and finish their themes; if not, they either complete them at home, or in the Laboratory. But within the next two days, before the next class meeting, they must revise the rough draft written in the Laboratory and submit it as Part IV, together with the other three parts. And so the instructor, when he sits down to his task of theme reading, has before him not one theme, but four stages in the evolution of what the student would like to call an Idea—stages which a skeptic might like to label "From the cradle to the grave." The cradle is often a bull-rush and the grave a whited sepulchre, but at least these four mental milestones reveal something of the thought processes and writing habits of the average freshman, God bless him! And, like other laboratory tests, they reveal symptoms of diseases that might otherwise go unnoticed and untreated.

We have tried to preserve the anology between a writing laboratory and a science laboratory—that is, any laboratory, whether in science or in composition, is a place where work is directed and supervised **in process.** The English Writing Laboratory does not take the place of classroom work, where instruction is provided, or of personal conferences, where invaluable work is done in trying to solve individual problems.

As for students not enrolled in composition courses, we hope that the Laboratory will become a haven of refuge—not of refuse—if they have writing assignments to fulfill in any of their other courses. In faculty meetings we have explained the objectives of the Laboratory and have invited our colleagues in other departments to urge their students to make use of the facilities we have provided. At all times when the Laboratory is open a representative of the composition staff is on duty, whether a composition class is using the Laboratory or not. He is ready to help these "optional" students in their writing problems. As students become acquainted with the Laboratory and its facilities, we hope to find all types of writing going on there, from term papers to doctoral dissertations, on subjects ranging from the amoeba to the "Amoretti."

Best feature of all, from the standpoint of the composition staff, is that the Laboratory entails very little extra work. Each member, of course, has one Laboratory period for each freshman class that he handles. In addition, he volunteers one extra hour each week in the Laboratory. The other hours during which the Laboratory is open are handled by an associate, a well qualified graduate student.

The remedial work which we hope to do for students above the freshman level is a problem still to be solved. But we hope that some of this work, whcih must naturally consist of individual attention, can be conducted in the Laboratory. To employ special instructors for this work is expensive; to overburden the staff is unthinkable. We hope that a system can be worked out whereby a student who is reported as deficient in his use of English can be assigned to work under the direction of some specific member of the staff who will be on duty in the Laboratory for one hour each week. This instructor could hold individual conferences with the student in the Laboratory and map out a program for the student to overcome his individual deficiencies.

Here is only the beginning of an experiment. Our child is barely beyond the embryonic stage. He will have to go through all the seven ages of man, and probably more, before he attains maturity. But in true parental fashion we believe in him, and we are working for him. And—herein lies the point of my tale—we would welcome the advice of any parents who have fostered such a child, and at the same time we would be glad to furnish pre-natal advice nad biological details to any colleagues who are considering procreating a similar offspring. You, undoubtedly, can help us, and perhaps we can help you. Could not the "News-Letter" serve as a convenient midwife for the exchange of our brain-children? If not, I should welcome any letters that any members of the CEA write me personally.

Douglas Bement
The George Washington University

Meet a Southern Poet

Since the members of the C. E. A. will soon be trekking south for their first annual meeting in New Orleans, December 28, and since they will have to pass through the State of Mississippi (the pet aversion of Mr. H. L. Mencken), it seems appropriate that they should meet en route the leading contemporary poet of the South, William Alexander Percy, a practicing lawyer and World War captain, of Greenvile, Mississippi.

Sappho in Levkas, In April Once, and **Enzio's Kingdom,** the title poems of Percy's three slender volumes, show his interest in the evocation of the past. His rippling lines in these poems cannot be better illustrated than by the following passage from **Sappho in Levkas:**

"A dawn of dew and hyacinths,
with grey-eyed, silver-footed April
loose
Upon the Hills."

But Percy is also the voice of the South. In his volume of **Selected Poems,** published by the Yale University Press, you will find **In Our Yard:**

"Moses, Moses, seeing God
In a bush that burned,
Moses, Moses, hearing God
Advising, unconcerned,

I believe you, for myself
Saw Him plain and heard—
Others saw a myrtle bush
That held a mocking bird."

Lawrence G. Painter
Mississippi State College

Proposed Constitution of CEA

Members who cannot be present at the first annual meeting may express their opinions of any sections of the proposed constitution and have their desires recorded at the meeting, by transcribing the following form on a postcard or in a letter and mailing it to any one of the members named herein.

I hereby request and authorize Douglas Bement or Robert T. Fitzhugh or Robert Gay or Herbert Drennon or Burges Johnson to urge in my behalf, in formal discussion, and to record my desire by final vote if possible, the following: (approval of the tentative draft in its entirety) (fewer restrictions upon membership) (a more limited membership) (more directors to insure wider geographical representation) (other alterations or additions as follows). I wish to be recorded (as favoring) (in opposition to) a CEA periodical publication. I am an enrolled member of CEA. Signed .....

Article I. NAME

The name of this organization is College English Association.

Article II. PURPOSE

Its objects are: the establishment and maintenance of high standards in the teaching of English literature and oral and written composition; the furtherance of cooperation and mutual understanding among teachers of these subjects; and collaboration with other organizations of teachers seeking similar objectives within their own fields of activity.

Article III. MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be limited to: (a) those already enrolled at the time this constitution goes into effect; (b) teachers in four-year colleges of recognized standing who are teaching classes in English literature or English composition at the undergraduate level; (c) those who have retired from such teaching as defined above, either by reason of age or in order to devote themselves to imaginative writing or literary criticism; (d) chairmen of English departments in such colleges, who have responsibility for such teaching as is described above. The Secretary is empowered to admit to membership, upon payment of their dues, all applicants conforming to these specifications; but in any case of doubt as to eligibility to submit the question to the membership committee whose decision shall be final.

Article IV. RESIGNATIONS

Resignations of members shall be effective when made to the Secretary in writing, and when dues for the current year have been paid.

Article V. DUES

Dues shall be determined by vote of the members at any annual meeting and shall be effective until changed by such vote at a later annual meeting.

Dues shall be payable Jan. 1. Members in arrears of dues for a full year shall be dropped.

Article VI. OFFICERS

Sec. 1. The officers shall be a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and a board of nine Directors, chosen from the membership. All officers and directors hold office until their successors are elected.

Sec. 2. Duties of the President and Vice-President: the President, or in his absence one of the Vice-Presidents, shall preside at the meetings of the Association, and of the Board of Directors. In the event of absence of all three from a meeting of the Association or of the Board, the Directors present may select presiding officers. The President or a Vice-President shall appoint all authorized committees not otherwise appointed, and shall, with the Secretary, sign all written contracts and obligations, and shall perform such other duties as the Board of Directors may assign. They shall serve for a term of one year and may not serve for more than two consecutive terms. They shall be ex-officio members of the Board of Directors.

Sec. 3. The Secretary shall send out notices of all meetings of the Association and of the Board of Directors and shall see that the minutes of such meetings are kept. He shall conduct the correspondence and keep the records of the association. He shall furnish to the Treasurer the names of all persons admitted to membership. He shall be empowered to incur obligations only in so far as he has been authorized to do so by the Board of Directors; and he shall draw up a budget of proposed expenditures for the coming year and submit it to the Board of Directors for their approval at the annual meeting. He shall serve for a term of three years and may be reelected to succeed himself. He shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors.

Sec. 4. The Treasurer shall collect all dues and shall keep the accounts of the association and report thereon to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting and at such other times as he is called upon. He shall pay all bills which have the approval of the Secretary and one other officer, either President, Vice-President, or a director. He shall serve for a term of three years and may be reelected to succeed himself. He shall be an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors.

Sec. 5. The Directors derive their authority from the members and shall govern and manage the association in accordance with the constitution and subject to instructions of the members as indicated at the annual meeting. They shall be nine in number, chosen from the membership and representing as many different sections of the country as is expedient; geographical distribution may be specified in the by-laws. Each director shall be elected for a term of three years, and no less than three shall retire from office in any one year. In case of death or resignation of a director the Board shall have the power to appoint a successor to serve until the next annual meeting.

The directors shall authorize a budget of expenditures for each year, and shall have sole power to approve any expenditures in excess of that budget.

Decisions of the Board of Directors shall be final if made at any meeting where seven directors are present in person or represented by proxy.

Article VII. COMMITTEES

Sec. 1. A Nominating Committee shall be chosen by the members at each annual meeting to serve for one year. Its duty shall be to prepare a slate of officers which shall be mailed to the members at least a month in advance of the next annual meeting.

Sec. 2. A Program Committee, a Membership Committee of three directors, and such other committees as may from time to time become necessary, shall be appointed by the President immediately after his assumption of office, to serve for one year.

Article VIII. MEETINGS

Sec. 1. The annual meeting of the organization shall be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association, at the same time and place, unless otherwise determined in any one year by the Board of Directors for reasons that seem to it good and sufficient, and notification shall be made to all members of such change at least two months in advance of the usual time of meeting.

Sec. 2. Special meetings may be called by the President and the Board of Directors when they shall deem it advisable.

Sec. 3. Regional meetings shall be encouraged wherever a large enough group of the members find it possible to assemble and at such time as they see fit. The effectiveness of the action of members assembled at such regional meetings shall be defined in the by-laws.

Sec. 4. Proxies representing members not in attendance may be counted in determining a quorum only if they be in writing, and apply to the one meeting only, and specify matters upon which the bearer may vote.

Sec. 5. Members present at any annual meeting may transact business and their decisions shall be binding upon the whole membership if more than one-fourth of the paid up members of the association are present. If less than one-fourth are present, action taken must be referred by mail to the whole membership. This action shall then be binding upon the association, if a majority negative vote is not received by the Secretary within thirty days after such submission.

Article IX. AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any annual meeting by vote of two-thirds of the membership either present in person or voting by mail as provided in the by-laws, but no amendment may be voted upon at any meeting unless a copy has been mailed to each of the members at least one month in advance of the date of meeting.

Tentative Program, 1st Annual Meeting

THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

New Orleans, Louisiana, 1939

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28

6:00 P. M. **Dinner:** Arnaud's Restaurant, 813 Bienville Street.
Non-members as well as members are welcome.
Toastmaster: Herbert Drennon, Mississippi State College
Address of Welcome: John Clark Jordan, U. of Arkansas
"Permanent Literary Values"—
"Teacher English"—Burges Johnson, Union College
"Reflections of an ex-English Teacher"—John M. McBryde

7:30 P. M. **Business Meeting:** Arnaud's Restaurant.
Presiding: Burges Johnson
A greeting from M. L. A.; William C. DeVane, Yale University.
"Shall We Publish and Why?"—Cleanth Brooks, Louisiana State U.
Report of the Nominating Committee.
Action on Proposed Constitution.
Election of Officers.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29

9:00 A. M. **Adjourned Meeting:** Arnaud's Restaurant
Presiding: Clifford P. Lyons, U. of Florida
"A Writer's Laboratory"—Douglas Bement, George Washington University.
Discussion led by Donald Davidson, Vanderbilt University
"Defining a Standard of Literacy"—Harlan W. Hamilton, University of Akron.
Discussion led by ————————
"Developing Critical Taste in the Classroom", John Crowe Ransom, Kenyon College
Discussion led by ————————

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Philology vs. Culture

Dear Editor:

There is a role the College English Association can play in American education, that of bridging the gap between philology and humanistic culture. That there is a gap, dissent to the use of scholarly material in some publications of the Modern Language Association illustrates: ingenious adaptations of facts and methods to advance conclusions which sound critical judgment and informed common sense deny. Scholastic learning never exercised itself to more futile ends than when it attempts to exorcise the unknown with a witch's-brew of provenience and analogs. The spirit of style or imagination seeks in vain for a spot to light on the gaunt but zealous pages of PMLA and, forced to keep its wings, sails as a wan spectre, homeless between its covers. Why are departments of English or modern languages riven by the hostility of one group for the other, by the often ill-concealed contempt of the scholar for the critic, as though either could be one without being the other? We need to explore the No Man's Land between the two camps and see if society isn't pleasanter there and more rewarding than behind the barbed wire entanglements.

It is probably a combination of incapacity and misplaced emphasis that lies behind the feud. A literal mind resents the quick wit of imagination, and the active creative intelligence needs an oxygen tent after too many hours in the laboratory. Doesn't the key to the past lie in the present as well as the key to the present in the past? Here is another No Man's Land: the stream of experience kept alive by one's own life and the lives of all others around him. Too many scholars at home in the scriptorium with its armerius, symbols, and silence miss the pulsating life outside the walls. The troubadour of one age sings to the troubadour of another. Too often the scholar writes for himself alone.

There was never a time when literature as a mirror of ideals and national culture needed examination as it does today, and we are forced to confine our speculation to parallels in minor Elizabethan dramatists or the subjunctive in Beowulf. Many of us fall between two stools in our study—we are intelligent and industrious enough to keep track of the facts and more over to supplement them with knowledge of related fields of interest and their facts. There are avenues of publication for such studies but they are in the small literary reviews and for the gifted person the best monthly journals, but for the teaching profession as a whole that type of literary culture receives small appreciation. Perhaps, more often than not, it is poorly done.

I like the ideals of the Renaissance humanists: the badge of scholarship courteously worn, the eye of information turned toward the criticism of society in its behaviour and manners, the ideal of social justice through gentility and right thinking. Pico, Hegius, Cheke, Erasmus, More, seeking pleasure with profit from their studies, might want to join an association of scholars characterized by the light of learning, not by its murky shadows.

Let the College English Association become a mid-wife and nurse to the future offspring of reason and imagination, the parents of science. A well-fostered academic child needs the best blood of both parents. Too many of our ill-nourished brats have suffered long because the parents have been divorced.

T. M. Pearce
University of New Mexico

A Pro-Seminar in American Literature

(Continued from Page 1)

vide a general background for the papers to follow; but that did not work out satisfactorily and, at the suggestion of a student, I began to introduce each period with a few lectures—six at the beginning of the year for Puritanism, at other times one or two. The student is given a start on a bibliography: the primary works to be reading Cotton Mather's diary, selected essays of Emerson, a novel by Henry James, Emily Dickinson's poetry—and a standard secondary source or two; and then he is thrown on his own. There has been no assigned textbook in the course, but this year the students have bought the new one-volume edition of Parrington; just how it will be used in the course has not been worked out.

The class begins as a group of disparate individuals, unsure of themselves, self-conscious in written expression and oral criticism. Most of the burden of comment and of "keeping things moving" falls on the instructor; and desirably so, since there is much in the early papers to criticize for defects in composition, approach, and treatment, and coverage of the subject must be corrected and supplemented. The result is a course in composition and literary criticism as well as literary history. Most difficult is to get a personal judgment, if not entirely independent of secondary sources, then at least supported by independently discovered evidence.

As the work progresses, the group takes on a subtle unity, like that of a restricted club. Sitting in judgment, the students develop a personal interest in one another; they soon take the measure of each and know what to expect of him in intellectual effort. They are quick to acknowledge a superior product, keen in detecting inadequate preparation in a half-done job, and generous in praising progressive improvement. Under guidance and the stress of competition they become bolder and more effective in writing and speaking. Improvement, of course, is neither constant nor relatively equal; but it is remarkable how an occasional student with a mediocre past record blossoms forth in unexpected ability as he reacts to these opportunities for self-expression before a sympathetic, competitive group.

The disciplinary values are obvious. Each student is obliged to write a manuscript of several thousand words every two weeks; if it is not ready on the date set the course simply stops dead: and the students will exert themselves to avoid responsibility for such a result. I regularly stress the greater educational return that comes from scheduling the work over the two-week period; but of course many a morning paper was prepared in a race with time the night before—a concentration of effort that is not altogether deplorable. My insistance on attendance at every class session is not disciplinary in purpose; one aim is to make sure that the student is exposed to the material of the course—there is no final examination to serve as a check; the other is to preserve the group spirit, which generally falls flat if one or two of the members are absent.

Long before the end of the year the students recognize the special values of the course. They appreciate the opportunity to gather knowledge at first hand and assimilate it, not passively, but by actively expressing themselves about it. They are obliged for the pressure that compels them to read widely in several new fields and to write regularly. At the end of the year each has a bundle of manuscripts, which has in more than one case bolstered an application for a graduate school scholarship. And they all enjoy the associations of the year. Again like a private club, the students of one year in effect select—and in some cases blackball—the applicants for the succeeding year.

Bertrand M. Wainger
Union College

Composition Major

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Miles L. Hanley of the University of Wisconsin writes, "I disapprove in principle of providing an undergraduate major in composition and rhetoric." He objects to the multiplication of university departments, but warns, "It is true that a department, by failing to meet a real need, will often encourage a revolt."

Finally, replies indicated that certain colleges have worked out courses of study wherein composition and literature are both represented adequately, neither infringing on the other's territory or development. Such a curriculum is that at the University of Michigan, where the English department offers, both undegraduate and graduate, "fields of concentration" in (1) English Composition, (2) English Language, (3) English Literature, and (4) Rhetoric and Criticism. Mt. Holyoke has two departments—that of English and English Speech, and that of English Literature and Drama. Each of these offers both undergraduate and graduate majors, and provides for a combination major Wellesley has a similar arrangement.

Because several of those who replied requested that any detailed information secured be passed along to them, a complete report is being prepared which, it is hoped, will be ready for distribution at the New Orleans meeting, perhaps in mimeographed form.

In the meantime, if any members of the Association who are interested in the problem will send me further information, this assistance will be most welcome.

C. C. Certain,
Wayne University,

I have interpreted your letter as a proposal to form an organization of English teachers who believe that English teaching should promote either the creation or the enjoyment of literature. I am ready to go all the way with you on that program. I have long ago ceased to believe that the kind of scholarship represented in the research publications is anything but historical, with occasional pale flashes of the philosophical temper. I have nothing against history, and the Modern Language Association does good historical work, but if we are to be historians, I think we should be trained in historical method and not delude ourrelves with the pleasant thought that we are literary experts. There is such a thing as literary criticism, as distinguished from historical research, and there is such a thing as an art of writing.

The proposed association ought to stand on its own feet. Instead of having an elaborate magazine which would entail labor for the editorial board, why not publish during the months of the academic year eight or nine pamphlets, each containing a single essay which the editorial board has invited some member of the association to communicate to his colleagues? A series of little papers, if they were on vital aspects of teaching and if they carried practical suggestions, might be valuable. The authors could copyright the material and reprint it afterwards, if they chose, in book form.

John Erskine

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Reading And Writing

I am heartily in favor of the formation of a new association of College teachers of English, and I am certain we shall find plenty to occupy ourselves with, to our great profit, without treading on the toes of other associations previously existent. Offhand, I can think of at least two territories that need cultivation— or, at least, a new system of cultivation. Briefly I have in mind:

First, the fact that for all our preaching, testing, graphs, expletives, penalties, and red pencils, the "sense of language" in the writing of our students seems ever to be on the verge of collapse. I am not now thinking primarily of spelling; the English language is probably the most idiotic contraption known to man, so far as othography is concerned, and I for one am in favor of mitigating its time-consuming irrationality, no matter how much we outrage the feeling of those who see the Anglo-Saxon or Old French or Latin original behind every word they write. What I am thinking of is its ordinary syntax, phrasing, and diction. We have in the past appealed to "good usage" to settle this or that point; and our students submit only so long as we — the dogmatists — are within hearing. We have failed to raise the prior question: "How did those whom we recognize as masters of good usage come to be so recognized?" — because this question forces us out from the shelter of what is at best only a flimsy dodge. It is time for teachers in their teaching to assume the same responsibilities that writers—the "good" writers—have assumed and must assume in their writing. "Why of yourselves judge ye not that which is good?" We must, by a first-hand inspection of the way the English language works when it is working well and when it is working badly, decide what locutions promote the aims of discourse and what do not; and we must show our students how we arrive at our judgments. "Could not help but go" needs to be compared carefully with "could not help going" to discover why the former arose, and what advantage, if any, it possesses. When submitted to such direct inspection, some taboos, such as that against allowing a relative pronoun to refer to the whole idea of a preceding passage, will "fold their tents like the Arab. . . " which will be all to the good. This realistic overhauling of language, however, must be kept in the hands of persons who by talent and training themselves possess a considerable gift of language. (I hope I am referring to college teachers of English. Or am I.)

Second, we need to teach our students to read. We have all of us for some time been uneasily aware that somewhere, just around the corner from our academic chairs, lounges, and settees, a truly monstrous problem of the interpretation of words was lurking in wait for us. But we have managed to ignore the main bulk of the beast, or have hidden behind a barrage of witticisms directed at examination paper howlers—as if these were nothing more than the gifts of a humorous Providence. The pioneer work of I. A. Richards and others should have recalled us to the main problem of all literary teaching: how to guarantee and facilitate the transmission from writer to reader of the total communication and the desired effect. I am convinced that we have hidden from ourselves and from our students, by a muffling thickness of generalized comment about the characteristics of the poetry of A, and the chief ideas in the fiction of B,the plain fact that many of our students could not evaluate or even read, a text of moderate difficulty without adventitious aids. I am not suggesting that we should discard literary history and traditional appreciations. In any civilized society the members can learn much of the results of human activity without themselves repeating the processes. But, if a civilization is not to die, its members must be capable of repeating those processes, and indeed of going forward to find new processes. It is of no avail to teach a student that some poems by Wordsworth are great poems, if he is totally incapable, unaided, of discriminating between one of Wordsworth's best and one of his worst. We need to re-orient our teaching of literature so as to make certain that we are first and foremost producing intelligent readers, rather than icely packed portmanteaus of English literature. Of course, miracles do occur; time and again, one of these portmanteaus turns into a self-operating, original set of brains. But I am not in favor of tempting Providence by continuing methods and emphases which require miracles to complete them.

I will even go so far as to say that in my opinion, an analytical study of language as used by those whose use of it impresses us, and as it is being and can be used by ourselves, is central not only to literary studies, but should be a central subject for all studies at the College level. Many of the most serious problems of the world today are problems of communication; and there is hardly any serious difficulty confronting mankind which does not in some way relate to problems of communication. So, you see, my particular cat is out of the bag—a regular fanatic of a cat, spitting defiance in all directions, and determined to rule every backyard in the block. I had best leave the animal to scramble awhile for itself. If it has the vitality I think it has, it will get on well enough.

F. Cudworth Flint
Dartmouth College.

"I am entirely opposed to the study of Middle English in translation. To learn enough Middle English to read Chaucer is so slight a matter that it seems to me entirely mollycoddling to let students read it in translation."

Henry Noble MacCracken,
Vassar College.

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